

Commonwealth of Virginia
Department of Social Services



ONS TRANSMITTAL NUMBER 05-05 **Date: September 20, 2005**

Subject: Policy Updates Related to Hurricane Katrina

To: ONS Resettlement Provider Directors

From: Kathy A. Cooper
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The federal Office of Refugee Resettlement released two State Letters with guidance on serving Hurricane Katrina evacuees who are refugees. These State Letters affect two requirements under which refugee resettlement agencies under contract with the Office of Newcomer Services operate. This ONS Transmittal explains these two requirements.

ORR State Letter 05-23 waives the 60-month limitation on provision of social services to refugees who have been in the United States for more than 60 months. While the waiver is not limited to refugees who live, or were evacuated from, the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina, it is for the “purpose of providing critical social services to victims of Hurricane Katrina who are desperate and in need of services.”

Based on ORR State Letter 05-23, and for the period September 1, 2005 through September 30, 2006, the Office of Newcomer Services is waiving the requirement that services be provided for no more than 60 months from the date of arrival. Specifically, the following two requirements are waived for one year:

1. The Virginia Refugee Resettlement Program Manual, Chapter V, Refugee Social Services, Item B. 4.a: “a refugee is eligible to receive services for up to 60 months”
2. Contract number COM-03-101 between ONS and the refugee resettlement agency, Section III, service providers are prohibited from providing services for more than 60 months (This waiver also applies to both the existing and the new contract number GONC-06-006.)

ORR State Letter Number 05-24 relaxes both the priority of service and the documentation requirements required for the delivery of services provided under the federal Refugee Resettlement Program. This relaxation of documentation requirements is for persons with the following status: refugees, asylees, Cuban/Haitian entrants, Amerasians, and victims of trafficking who were recently evacuated or displaced as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

Based on ORR State Letter 05-24, and for the period September 1, 2005 and September 30, 2006, the Office of Newcomer Services is relaxing its requirements for the following two requirements:

1. All individuals displaced or evacuated as a result of Hurricane Katrina are to receive priority social services. Priority of service may be relaxed. The Virginia Refugee Resettlement Program Manual, Chapter V, Refugee Social Services, Item C.1 and Contract number COM-03-101 between ONS and the refugee resettlement agency, IX, both state that services to individuals and families be provided according to specified order of priority which would preclude prioritizing service delivery to those individuals who had been in the U.S. for more than one year. (This is for both the existing contract number COM-03-101 and the new contract number GONC-06-006.)
2. Documentation of status may be by declaration. Attached is a declaration form from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement. Evacuated or displaced Hurricane Katrina individuals may no longer have access to needed documentation and identification. A written declaration of their status is sufficient to provide refugee services.

Additionally, attached for your information, are the most recent VDSS procedures for responding to evacuees from the Gulf Coast displaced by Hurricane Katrina. [VDSS updates these procedures as new information is received from the many and various federal agencies.] Included in the attached procedures is a section on *Evacuees Who May Have Refugee Status*. Local departments of social services were directed to refer evacuees who claim refugee status to refugee resettlement providers. ONS included this direction so that any refugees who may have been displaced by Hurricane Katrina were referred to you refugee social services.

Declaration for Victims of Hurricane Katrina

I, _____, make the following statement under the penalty of perjury and I believe that all the information contained in this declaration is true and correct.

My name is: _____

My Alien Registration Number, ("A #") is: _____ (if available)

I was born on the _____ day of _____, 19____

I am currently a _____, (a refugee, asylee, Cuban/Haitian entrant, Amerasian, Victim of Trafficking, or a Lawful Permanent Resident that previously held status as a refugee, asylee, Cuban/Haitian entrant or a Victim of Trafficking)

My most recent permanent address prior to being evacuated as a result of Hurricane Katrina was located at:

Street: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip Code: _____

I acknowledge that I have been displaced as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

My "date of entry" into the United States was _____ or

I was granted asylum on _____ or

I became a Cuban/Haitian entrant on _____ or

My ORR Trafficking Eligibility or Certification letter was dated

_____.

Signature of Applicant

Date

[Questions Regarding This Form? Contact Penny Boyd at penny.boyd@dss.virginia.gov or 804-726-7933]